

Do You Have a Family Disaster Plan?

I. Gather Information About Hazards

Gather information about hazards. Contact your local National Weather Service office, emergency management office, and American Red Cross chapter. Find out what types of disasters could occur and what you should do. Learn about your community's methods of warning people and evacuation plans. Ask your insurance agent about flood insurance. Find out what you can do to protect your home from the effects of natural hazards that could occur where you live.

Meet with your family to create a plan. Discuss the information you have gathered. Pick two places to meet: a

spot outside your home for an emergency such as a fire, and a place away from your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Choose an out-of-town family member or friend as your family check-in contact for everyone to call if the family gets separated, and a backup out-of-neighborhood friend in case the first one does not answer. Discuss what you would do and how to do it if advised to evacuate. Use one vehicle only to avoid getting separated and reduce traffic jams. Decide what measures you will take to make your home less vulnerable to disasters.

II. Implement Your Plan

1. Post emergency telephone numbers by phones and in address lists each person carries with them. Include cell phone numbers of family and contact-points.
2. Install safety features in your home, such as smoke alarms and fire extinguishers.
3. Inspect your home for potential hazards such as items that can move, fall, break, or catch fire, and correct them.
4. Make physical changes that will make your home less vulnerable; install check-valves and hurricane shutters; strap the hot water heater to wall studs.
5. Have your family learn basic safety skills such as CPR/Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and first aid; how to use a fire extinguisher; and how and when to turn off water, gas, and electricity at the main switches and valves. Know how to operate a NOAA Weather Radio.

6. Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number.
7. Keep emergency supplies in your home sufficient for 3 days to a week, if your area has ever lost basic water, electricity and gas service for a week or longer. Assemble a disaster supplies kit with things you will need if you have to evacuate. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks or duffel bags.
8. Keep important family documents in a waterproof and fire-resistant container.
9. Keep a smaller emergency kit with seasonal supplies, tools, and clothes in the trunk of your car.
10. Each person who has a cell phone should carry it and keep it turned on to receive calls in any emergency situation.

III. Prepare a Disaster Kit to Include:

- At least a 3-day water supply (one gallon per person per day) • Food that won't spoil • One change of clothing and footwear per person • One blanket or sleeping bag per person • First-aid kit • Prescription medicines • Emergency tools • Battery-powered NOAA Weather

- Radio • Portable radio • Flashlight with extra batteries • Extra set of car keys • Cash and credit card • Special items for infant, elderly, and disabled family members.

IV. Practice and Maintain Your Plan

Ask questions to make sure each family member remembers meeting places, telephone and cell phone numbers, and safety rules. Conduct drills. Test smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Test and recharge fire extinguishers according to manufacturer's instructions and make sure family mem-

bers remember how to operate them. Replace emergency food and water supplies once every six months. Contact your local National Weather Service office, American Red Cross chapter or emergency management office for a copy of a Your Family Disaster Plan (FEMA, L-191 or ARC4466).

LOCAL SPONSORSHIPS



FLOODS THE AWESOME POWER



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Weather Service
July 2002



Why Should I be Concerned About Flooding?

This preparedness guide explains floods and related hazards and suggests life-saving actions YOU can take. With this information YOU can recognize a flood potential, develop a plan, and be ready when threatening weather approaches. Remember...your safety is up to YOU!

In the long term, floods kill more people in the United States than other forms of severe weather. In recent years, only heat has surpassed flood fatalities. Floods can roll boulders the size of cars, tear out trees, destroy buildings and bridges, and pose a significant threat to human lives.

Additional flash flood/flood related safety information can be obtained at:

The American Red Cross:
<http://www.redcross.org/>

The U.S. Geological Survey:
<http://www.usgs.gov/>

The Federal Emergency Management Agency:
<http://www.fema.gov/>

"Flooding never happens here. Tom was trying to get home. He drives on the road near the stream every day. We knew it had been raining a lot, but it had been so dry, we were actually happy about the rain. Tom saw some water on the road, but thought it wasn't that deep. And, after all, he was in his truck, high up off the ground. But then his truck started to float, and before he knew it, his truck was washed downstream with him in it. Fortunately, his truck got stuck on a rock or something, and someone saw him and threw him a line. Tom got out okay. But we really learned from this, not to drive in floods."

- *Testimony of Marilyn & Tom (last name requested to be withheld), interviewed after Tropical Storm Allison struck Texas in June, 2001 by the American Red Cross*

Major Flash Flood Disasters in United States history

May 31, 1889

A dam above Johnstown, PA failed sending a huge flood wave through the city, killing 2,200 residents

February 26, 1972

The Buffalo Creek Dam, located in southern West Virginia collapsed sending a black wave of water through one coal mining town after another killing more than one hundred people and leaving 4,000 people homeless

June 5, 1976

The Teton Dam located in southeast Idaho failed killing 14 people and causing \$1 billion dollars in damages

WATER LEVEL (FEET)

15

14

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What are Flash Floods?

Flash floods are short-term events, occurring within 6 hours of the causative event (heavy rain, dam break, levee failure, rapid, snowmelt and ice jams) and often within 2 hours of the start of high intensity rainfall. A flash flood is characterized by a rapid stream rise with depths of water that can reach well above the banks of the creek. Flash flood damage and most fatalities tend to occur in areas immediately adjacent to a stream or arroyo. Additionally, heavy rain falling on steep terrain can weaken soil and cause mud slides, damaging homes, roads and property.

Flash floods can be produced when slow moving or multiple thunderstorms occur over the same area. When storms move faster, flash flooding is less likely since the rain is distributed over a broader area.

Flash Flood Risks at Home, Work, or School

Since many flash floods occur along small streams, you can determine your risk by knowing your proximity to streams. Flooding can be caused by rain that falls several miles upstream and then moves rapidly downstream.

Highly populated areas have a high risk for flash floods. The construction of buildings, highways, driveways, and parking lots increases runoff by reducing the amount of rain that the ground can absorb. This runoff increases the flash flood potential. Sometimes, streams through cities and towns are routed underground into storm drains. During periods of heavy rainfall, storm drains may become overwhelmed and flood roads and buildings. Low spots, such as underpasses, underground parking garages and basements can become death traps.

Embankments, known as levees, are built along the side of a river and are used to prevent high water from flooding bordering land. In 1993, many levees failed along the Mississippi River, resulting in devastating flash floods.

Dam failures have played a deadly role in the history of flash flooding. The United States has about 76,000 dams, and about 80 percent of those are made

of earthfill construction. Be aware of any dams upstream of your location. Earthen dams are more easily compromised by heavy rainfall than are concrete structures. Water flowing over an earthen dam can cause the dam to weaken or fail, sending a destructive wall of water downstream.

Flash Flood Risk at Play (Camping, Hiking, Boating, Fishing)

Many leisure activities take place along streams and rivers. Be aware of the potential flash flood danger when you are conducting your leisure activities along small streams and rivers. A creek only 6 inches deep in mountainous areas can swell to a 10-foot deep raging river in less than an hour if a thunderstorm inundates an area with intense rainfall.

When thunderstorms are in the area, stay alert for rapidly changing conditions. You may notice the stream start to rise quickly and become muddy. You may hear a roaring sound upstream that may be a flood wave moving rapidly toward you. Head immediately for higher ground. Don't be swept away by the rapidly rising water. There are dangers associated with fast-moving water, but with common sense and some preparation, enthusiasts can enjoy a safe day along a stream or river.

Flash Flood Risk in Your Car, Truck, or Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV)

Almost half of all flash flood fatalities occur in vehicles. What people don't realize is two feet of water on a bridge or highway can float most vehicles. If the water is moving rapidly, the car, truck or SUV can be swept off the bridge and into the creek.

Water can erode the road bed creating



unsafe driving conditions. Underpasses can fill rapidly with water, while the adjacent roadway remains clear. Driving into an underpass can quickly put you in 5-6 feet of water. Many flash floods occur at night when flooded roads are difficult to see. When you approach a flooded road, turn around and go another way.

Contrary to popular belief, SUVs are typically more susceptible to floating than cars. Larger tires are more buoyant, making the vehicle float easier and causing the driver to lose control more quickly.

Barricades are put up for your protection. Turn around and go another way!

Where You are Determines Your Flash Flood/Flood Risk

Mountains and steep hills produce rapid runoff and quick stream response. Rocks and clay soils do not allow much water to infiltrate the ground. Steep narrow valleys generate rapid flowing waters that can rise quickly to a considerable depth. Saturated soil can also quickly lead to flash flooding.

Very intense rainfall can produce flooding even on dry soil. In the West, most slot canyons and "small streams" not easily recognizable as a source of danger. Slot canyons, common in National Parks, can be scoured with sudden walls of water 10-15 feet high (e.g., Antelope Canyon, Arizona, August 1997, 11 fatalities).

Flash floods occur within 6 hours of the causative event (rain, dam break, levee failure) and often within 2 hours of the start of heavy rain!

The Flash Flood Season

Flash flooding is often the result of heavy rainfall and therefore occurs most frequently in areas where the number of thunderstorm days is highest. Steep terrain, such as the Appalachian and Ozark mountains, the front range of the Rocky Mountains and in slot canyons of the West adds to the flash flood risk.

Listen for a roaring sound upstream as flood waters could be headed your way!

Look for rapidly rising water and/or water turning muddy!

What are River Floods?

A flood is the inundation of a normally dry area caused by an increased water level in an established water-course. River flooding is often caused by excessive rain from tropical systems making landfall, and may also be caused by thunderstorms persistently moving over the same geographic areas for extended periods of time. The Great Flood of 1993 occurred on the Mississippi River when thunderstorms battered the Midwest for several months.

During the colder months of the year, river floods are produced by widespread rainfall or snowmelt from organized storms that persist over a period of days. In



Ice Jam Flooding

the mountains and over much of the northern United States, combined rainfall and snowmelt in the spring increases stream flow and can result in significant flooding.

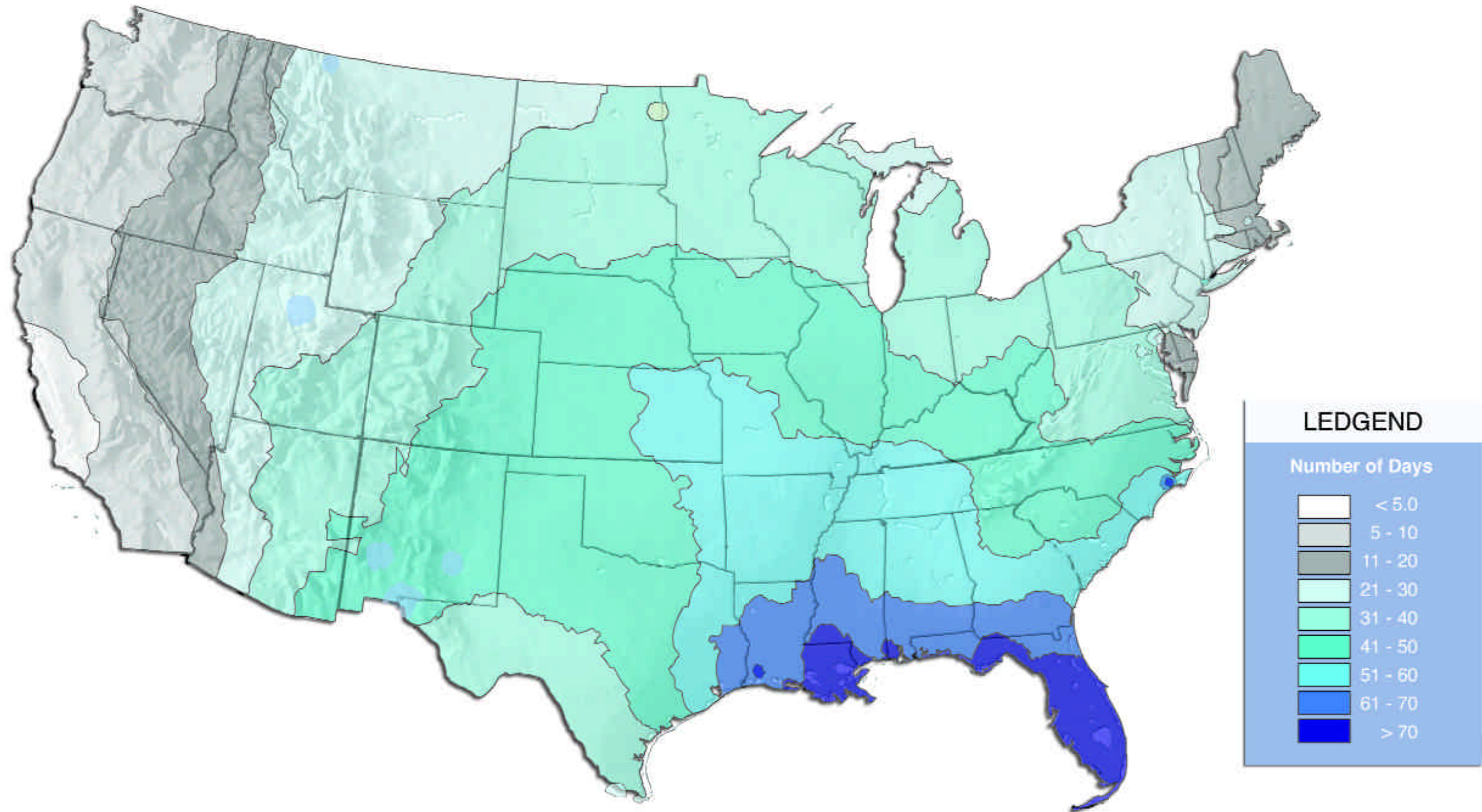
Ice jam flooding is another hazard in winter and spring. Thick ice can form in the rivers and streams during the winter. Warmer weather or spring rains can break the ice into large segments that can cause damage to bridges and other structures along the river. The ice may jam against a bridge or some other obstruction creating a dam in the river that causes flooding upstream. The force of the water building behind the ice jam can cause a sudden release which floods areas downstream of the jam.



River Flooding



Annual Mean Number of Days With Thunder 30-year mean 1961 - 1990



Tropical Cyclones and Their Remnants

Floods are often produced by hurricanes, tropical storms and tropical depressions. A tropical cyclone's worst element is the inland flooding associated with torrential rains as Tropical Storm Allison proved in June 2001.

When hurricanes and tropical storms move inland, they are typically accompanied by very heavy rain. When these decaying storms move slowly over land, they can produce rainfall amounts of 20 to 40 inches over several days. Widespread flash flooding and river flooding can result from these slow moving storms.

A hurricane can produce a deadly storm surge that inundates coastal areas as it makes landfall. Storm surge is simply water that is pushed toward the shore by the force of the winds swirling around the storm. This advancing surge combines with the normal tides to create the hurricane storm tide, which can increase the mean water level 15 feet or more.

The greatest natural disaster in the United States, in terms of loss of life, was caused by a storm surge and



River Flooding

associated coastal flooding from the great Galveston, Texas, hurricane of 1900. At least 8,000 people lost their lives. Deaths from hurricane storm surge have fallen dramatically in recent years, but storm surge remains a great threat for loss of life.

**Floods are long term events
and may last days, weeks,
or LONGER!**



Stay Informed

Listen to National Oceanic and Atmospheric and Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio (NWR), commercial radio, television or go to the Internet for the latest flash flood and flood WATCHES, WARNINGS, and WEATHER ADVISORIES at: <http://iwin.nws.noaa.gov/iwin/nationalwarnings.html>.

The Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Services (AHPS) is the NWS' frontline solution to provide improved river and flood forecasting and water information across America. Their home on the web is at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/water/Ahps.shtml>

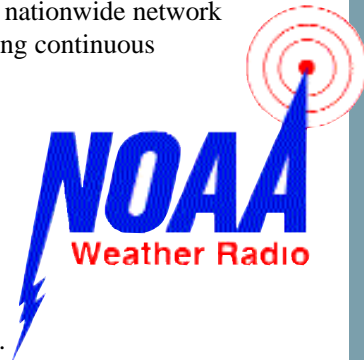
AHPS has new and improved graphical products to assist community leaders and emergency managers in making better life and cost-saving decisions about evacuating people or moving property before a flood occurs.

Flood Hazard Map information is only a click away by going to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) web page at: <http://www.fema.gov/mit/tsd>.

Have an evacuation plan in place BEFORE flooding occurs. Flooded roads may cut off your escape route. Head for higher ground before the water becomes too deep. Remember - just six inches of rapidly flowing water can knock you off your feet. For information on how or what to do if you are advised to evacuate, visit the American Red Cross Web page at: <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/evacuation.html>.

Use NOAA Weather Radio!

NOAA Weather Radio is the best way to receive warnings from the National Weather Service (NWS). NOAA Weather Radio is a nationwide network of radio stations broadcasting continuous weather information direct from a nearby NWS office.



NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts NWS warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24-hours a day. The average reception range is a 40-mile radius from the transmitter, depending on topography. Be familiar with the geography of your watershed, especially upstream from your location. Be aware of the potential for flash flooding before the heavy rainfall begins by listening to NOAA Weather Radio.

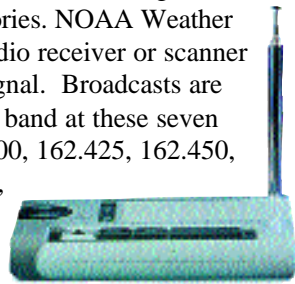
Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio that has a battery back-up, a Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME) feature, which automatically alerts you when a Watch or Warning is issued for your county or parish, and one that can receive all seven NOAA Weather Radio frequencies.

NOAA Weather Radio can also broadcast Warning and post-event information for all types of hazards - both natural (earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanos) and environmental (chemical or oil spills). Known as the "Voice of the National Weather Service," NOAA Weather Radio is provided as a public service by the

What to Listen For			
FLOOD WATCH	FLASH FLOOD WARNING	FLOOD WARNING	FLOOD STATEMENT
Flash flooding or flooding is possible within the Watch area for areas along rivers and streams. Be alert! If you are in a Watch area, check flood action plans, keep informed, and be ready to act if a warning is issued or you see flooding.	Flash flood warnings are issued when flooding is expected within 6 hours due to heavy precipitation, snow melt, ice jams, or dam failures. People in the warning area should take precautions IMMEDIATELY to protect life and property!	A flood WARNING is issued when flooding is expected to occur more than 6 hours after heavy precipitation, snow melt, ice jams, or dam failures. People in the warning area should take precautions IMMEDIATELY!	Flood statements contain supplemental information regarding a flash flood/flood event.

Department of Commerce's NOAA.

The NOAA Weather Radio network has more than 650 transmitters, covering the 50 states, adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the U.S. Pacific Territories. NOAA Weather Radio requires a special radio receiver or scanner capable of receiving the signal. Broadcasts are found in the public service band at these seven frequencies (MHz): 162.400, 162.425, 162.450, 162.475, 162.500, 162.525, 162.550 (also known as channels 1 through 7).



NOAA Weather Radio requires a special radio receiver or scanner capable of picking up the signal. These receivers can be purchased at retail electronic stores and sporting good stores.



To help America prepare for the ravages of flash floods and floods, the National Weather Service has designed StormReady, to arm America's communities with the communication and safety skills necessary to save lives and property.

More information is available at:
<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/stormready>

Community Preparedness Plans

After you have developed a personal/family safety plan, find out about your community safety plan. Each community prone to a flash flood/flood should develop a safety plan. Local officials should have detailed information for your immediate area. Please listen and follow their recommendations before, during, and after a storm.

The best way to prevent loss of life is to design and build communities where roads remain usable and undamaged during floods and homes and businesses are protected. While this may not always be possible, it is a goal we hope every community strives to reach.

Protect yourself, your home, your family, and your financial future.

Call your insurance company or agent to find out if your community participates in the NFIP. If it does, ask for details about how to buy insurance. Policies go into effect 30 days after a policy is purchased. Protect your home and your family today. For more information about the NFIP, call 1-800-427-4661. For flood insurance, contact your insurance company or agent.

What Can My Community Do?

- ✓ Provide river and rainfall readings to emergency managers and the National Weather Service.
- ✓ Establish early warning procedures
- ✓ Consider operating a Local Flood Warning System Identify areas vulnerable to flooding
- ✓ Follow the flood emergency action plans
- ✓ Contact your local emergency management agency or local NWS office for further information on Local Flood Warning Systems, or visit:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/oh/docs/alfws-handbook>

National Flood Insurance Program

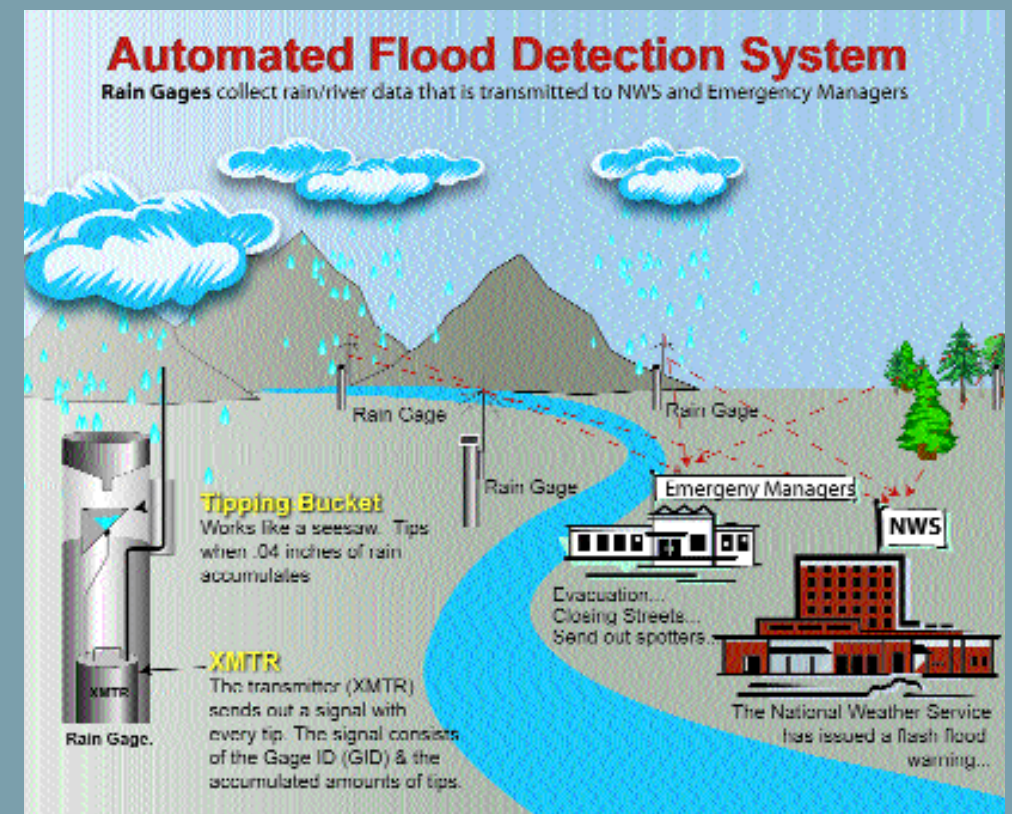
One of the most important things that you can do to protect your home and family before a flood is to purchase a flood insurance policy. You can obtain one through your insurance company or agent. Your agent can tell you whether the standard or preferred (for medium or low risk) is best for you. Flood insurance is backed by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Your homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage. Everyone has some flood risk, and anyone in a participating jurisdiction is eligible. Don't wait until a flood is coming to purchase your policy. It normally takes 30 days after purchase for a flood insurance policy to go into effect. For more information about the NFIP and flood insurance, contact your insurance company or call the NFIP at 1-800-427-4661.

Check with your city or county government (start with the Building or Planning Office) to find out if you live in a participating jurisdiction and what information is available about flood risk where you live.

Streamage Data Save Lives

National Weather Service forecasters rely on a network of almost 10,000 river gages to monitor the height of rivers and streams across the Nation. Many provide real-time observations by satellite links to forecasters. This information provides a snapshot of present river conditions and is the initial information needed to develop a river forecast. Most of the streamgages are maintained by the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Agriculture.

National Weather Service forecasters rely on a network of almost 10,000 river gages to monitor the height of rivers and streams across the Nation



What You Can Do Before the Flood...

When you receive a Flood Watch:

- ✓ A Watch is issued when flash flooding is possible within the watch area. When a flash flood watch is issued, you should be aware of potential flood hazards. Everyone in a Watch area should be ready to respond and act quickly.
- ✓ Know your flood risk and elevation above which flooding occurs. Do your local streams or rivers flood easily? If so, be prepared to move to a safe place. Know your evacuation routes.
- ✓ Find out if you are located in a high, medium or low flood risk area. Check with your city or county government to find out if your community is participating in the National Flood Insurance Program. Start with the Building or Planning Department to review the Flood Insurance Rate Maps, published by the

Federal Emergency Management Agency.

- ✓ Develop an evacuation plan. Everyone in your family should know where to go if they have to leave.
- ✓ Discuss floods with your family. Everyone should know what to do in case all family members are not together. Discussing floods ahead of time helps reduce fear and anxiety and lets everyone know how to respond.
- ✓ Determine if the roads you normally travel to reach your home or job will be flooded during a storm. If so, look for alternative routes to use during flooding.
- ✓ Keep a NOAA Weather Radio, a battery-powered portable radio, emergency cooking equipment, and flashlights in working order.
- ✓ Have a professional install check-valves in plumbing to prevent flood waters from backing up into drains of your home.
- ✓ Keep your automobile fueled; if electric power is cut off, gas stations may not be able to operate pumps for days.
- ✓ Store drinking water in food-grade containers. Water service may be interrupted.
- ✓ Keep a stock of food requiring little cooking and no refrigeration; electric power may be interrupted.
- ✓ Keep first-aid supplies and prescription medicines on hand.



River Flooding

Truth OR Fiction

Myth A 100-year flood occurs only once every 100 years.	Fact The 100-year flood is a climatic average; there is a 1% chance that a 100-year flood will occur in any given year
Myth Flash floods mainly occur in the eastern United States.	Fact Flash floods occur in all 50 states, including Alaska and Hawaii.
Myth Flash floods occur only along flowing streams.	Fact Flash floods can occur in dry arroyos and urban areas where no streams are present.
Myth Flash floods occur mainly in the late afternoon and evening.	Fact Many flash floods occur at night.
Myth Homeowners insurance policies cover flooding.	Fact Unfortunately, many homeowners do not find out until it is too late that their policies do not cover flooding. Contact your insurance company or agent to buy flood insurance.
Myth You can't buy flood insurance if your property has been flooded.	Fact You are still eligible to purchase flood insurance after your home, apartment, or business has been flooded, provided your community is participating in the National Flood Insurance Program.
Myth Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) can make it through flood waters.	Fact Larger vehicles have bigger tires which hold more air making them float easier. This puts owners of SUVs at a greater risk.

What You Can Do During the Flood...

When you receive a Flood Warning:

- ✓ If advised to evacuate, do so immediately! Use only one vehicle, to avoid getting separated and reduce traffic jams. Move to a safe area before access is cut off by flood water. Continue listening to NOAA Weather Radio, radio or television for information concerning the flooding.
- ✓ Stay home. Don't drive if you don't have to.
- ✓ Get out of areas subject to flooding. This includes dips, low spots, canyons, washes, etc. Do not attempt to cross flowing streams.
- ✓ Never try to walk, swim, drive, or play in flood water. You may not be able to see how fast the flood water is moving or see holes or submerged debris.
- ✓ Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams and washes, particularly during threatening conditions.



- ✓ Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.
- ✓ Do not attempt to drive through a flooded road. The depth of water is not always obvious. The road bed may be washed out under the water, and you could be stranded or trapped.
- ✓ Do not drive around a barricade. Barricades are there for your protection. Turn around and go another way!
- ✓ If the vehicle stalls, leave it immediately and move to higher ground. Rapidly rising water may engulf the vehicle and its occupants and sweep them away. Vehicles can be swept away by as little as 2 feet of water.
- ✓ Children should NEVER play around high water, storm drains, viaducts, or arroyos. It is very easy to be swept away by fast-moving water.
- ✓ If you come upon a flowing stream where water is above your ankles, STOP! Turn around and go another way. Climb to higher ground. If it is moving swiftly, even water 6 inches deep can knock you off your feet. Many people are swept away wading through flood waters, resulting in injury or death.

**During a Flood Warning,
Stay at Home
Whenever Possible!**

What You Can Do After the Flood...

- ✓ Get necessary medical care at the nearest hospital. The American Red Cross can provide shelter, food, and first aid, as well as a means to purchase new clothing.
- ✓ Do not visit disaster areas. Your presence might hamper rescue and other emergency operations.
- ✓ Use flashlights, not lanterns, torches, or matches, to examine buildings. Flammables may be inside.
- ✓ If the power is out, use flashlights, not candles.

- ✓ Report broken utility lines to appropriate authorities.
- ✓ Boil drinking water before using. Wells should be pumped out and the water tested for purity before drinking. If in doubt, call your local public health authority.
- ✓ If fresh or canned food has come in contact with flood waters, throw it out.
- ✓ Take steps to reduce your risk of future floods. Make sure to follow local building codes and ordinances when rebuilding, and use flood-resistant materials and techniques to protect yourself and your property from future flood damage.

**Do not visit disaster areas
following a flood.
Your presence may hamper urgent
emergency and rescue operations!**

